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Bosses Skip, Capital Goes on 'Hold'

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At 3:30 p.m. yesterday Sen. John Warner's office telephone rang once. Then a low-pitched female voice began speaking, to the accompaniment of a faint mechanical hum.

"Hello," said the recorded voice. "This is Senator Warner's office. Due to the long Labor Day holiday, there is no one in the office at the present time to receive your call ... Thanks for calling and have a pleasant holiday."

Warner wasn't alone.

A Who's Who in Washington could have been published on the back of a postcard yesterday afternoon.

Three days ahead of the Labor Day holiday, the nation's leadership had deserted a hot, muggy capital, leaving federal agencies, city businesses and organizations in little-known—and sometimes unwilling—hands.

Washington Post reporters yesterday searched for the city's elite and found the expected: skipping out of the office has become a summertime ritual in the city.

To be sure some leaders were in town. CIA Director Stansfield Turner was "in conference." FBI Director William Webster was "tied up" and Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance was greeting a foreign dignitary.

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